



**REPORT OF THE TELECONFERENCE OF THE BUREAU OF THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE (INC) ON MERCURY
20 APRIL 2015**

Participants

Mr. Yingxian Xia (China, for Asia-Pacific), Mr. Oumar Cisse (Mali, for Africa), Mr. Alojz Grabner (Slovenia, for Central and Eastern Europe), Ms. Nina Cromnier (Sweden, for the Western European and Others Group), Ms. Sezaneh Seymour (United States of America, for the Western European and Others Group), Mr. Fernando Lugris (Uruguay, for Latin America and the Caribbean) and the Interim secretariat for the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

Mr. Mohammed Khashashneh (Jordan, for Asia Pacific), Mr. David Kapindula (Zambia, for Africa) and Ms. Gillian Guthrie (Jamaica, for Latin America and the Caribbean) were not able to attend the Bureau teleconference.

1) Opening of the Bureau meeting

The INC Chair, Mr. Fernando Lugris, welcomed those present to the teleconference. He indicated his pleasure that the Bureau was able to meet, and indicated that he wanted to assess the results of the sixth session of the INC (INC6) held from 3 to 7 November 2014 in Bangkok, as well as give input to the preparation of its seventh session (INC7). He hoped that agreement could be reached on possible dates for the seventh session during the teleconference, and also emphasized the need, in the coming months, for a face-to-face meeting of the Bureau to contribute to intersessional work and further the preparations for INC7.

2) Adoption of the provisional agenda

The provisional agenda was adopted unchanged.

3) Reflections by the Bureau members on the outcome of INC6 and next steps towards INC7, including expected documents and results

The Chair indicated that he anticipated INC7 would be the last session of the committee prior to the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties. He said INC6 had been a positive meeting, and encouraged further work in the same spirit to make significant progress at INC7. He noted the need to mobilize resources, as well as the need to cooperate with colleagues and to maintain the momentum.

The recent regional workshops to support the ratification and effective implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury held back to back with the preparatory meetings for the 2015 meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions have provided an excellent opportunity to maintain the momentum of discussions. He recognized the input of the Bureau members, and the time they have devoted to making these meetings a success. He also thanked the secretariat for their input on these, and most particularly expressed appreciation to donor countries who have made such meetings possible.



4) Update from Bureau members on progress towards ratification and implementation in their region

The Chair called for inputs from the Bureau members regarding progress towards ratification and implementation in their respective regions. He indicated that he had had discussions with the UNEP Executive Director and the Senior Legal Officer, who indicated that, in their view, good progress was being made, and there was a good possibility that the Convention could enter into force during the first half of 2016. He noted that there are currently 10 countries who have completed the process and deposited their instruments of ratification (acceptance or accession) in New York with the Depository.

With respect to progress towards ratification in the GRULAC region, the Chair noted with pleasure that Panama had just ratified at the national level, and would likely deposit their instrument shortly. The sub-regional workshops held in the region have allowed very active work with a high level of commitment from governments. The regional meeting also allowed an opportunity to exchange views, and allowed countries to demonstrate the national activities underway. It is likely that a number of countries will deposit their instruments either later in 2015 or early in 2016.

In presenting progress in the WEOG region, Ms. Seymour indicated that a number of JUSSCANZ countries have made significant progress and are moving forward, however could not indicate a timeline. Ms. Cromnier indicated that work within the European Union was ongoing, and it was still the intent that the EU and its member states would ratify at the same time, however it may take some time before all are ready.

For the CEE region, Mr. Grabner indicated that the situation in EU member countries of the region reflected the progress of the EU and that these countries were preparing to ratify the Minamata Convention as part of the EU-ratification package. On the other hand, he indicated there was limited information from non-EU member countries, although a number of them were undertaking preparatory activities without any major difficulty reported to date.

For the Asia Pacific region, Mr. Xia highlighted that the regional meeting had provided an opportunity to share progress at the national level, with many countries moving forward. There had been good discussions with the GEF secretariat on opportunities, including for funding of enabling activities in the interim period, and had been good input for the region.

For Africa, Mr. Cissé indicated that many delegations work towards ratification in 2015, and good progress had been made at the national level in a number of countries. An upcoming workshop on dental amalgam for a selection of Governments from Francophone Africa (23 to 24 April 2015 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire) will provide assistance to countries in implementing convention obligations regarding dental amalgam. Many countries are applying for support from the GEF, and these activities would support further work.

The Chair welcomed the reports of progress provided by the Bureau members, and encouraged them to continue to work within their regions. He highlighted the possibility of holding a further special event on the ratification of the Minamata Convention in the margins of the Treaty Event at the General Assembly next September 2015 which would



provide an excellent opportunity for countries to have public recognition of their efforts and would further increase the visibility of the Convention.

5) Update on activities since INC6

a. Status of signatories and ratification

The secretariat reported that, as of 20 April 2015, there were 128 signatories and 10 Parties to the Convention.

b. Reporting on, and plans for awareness raising and capacity building activities, including support to ratification and early implementation (secretariat);

The secretariat indicated that, since INC6, four subregional workshops had been held, in Mexico (for Mesoamerica countries), Trinidad and Tobago (for Caribbean countries), Samoa (for Pacific islands countries) and Belarus (for Eastern European and Central Asian countries). These workshops concluded the first round of subregional workshops. These workshops had as objective to raise awareness of the mercury issue and the Convention obligations, and provided an opportunity for countries to develop their national road maps towards ratification and early implementation. Between March 2014 and February 2015, twelve subregional workshops had been held with more than 120 countries and over 300 government representatives participating, as well as representatives from civil society and intergovernmental organizations.

Between mid-March and mid-April 2015, four joint regional meetings have been held in cooperation and coordination with the BRS secretariat. The meetings were held in Jakarta for the Asia and the Pacific region, Nairobi for the Africa region, Bratislava for the Central and Eastern Europe region and Central Asia region and Montevideo for the Latin American and Caribbean region. These large workshops to support countries efforts towards ratification and effective implementation and discuss latest progress allowed the presentation of activities at the national level and further information exchange within the region including on items for cooperation, building on the good work at the sub-regional workshops. They also provided an opportunity to discuss outcomes of INC6, preparations for INC7 and COP1, including the work of the group of technical experts on emissions and the ad hoc working group of experts on financing. Based on discussions during the meeting, as well as the responses received to the survey circulated by the interim secretariat prior to each workshop, it is estimated that between 25 and 30 countries should be able to ratify by the end of the year. Cooperative activities were also presented at these meetings, and the presentation of activities supported by the GEF in cooperation with implementing agencies was also very useful. Activities funded by other donors are underway, particularly through UNITAR and the interim secretariat, and the coordination of all implementation support is key, and has been addressed by the agencies.

The secretariat asked for the input of the Bureau with regard to activities to be conducted, subject to available resources, between now and INC7.

The Chair noted that all activities to support implementation and ratification were crucial, and that countries needed to be well informed and on board for the process, including being fully aware of the financial resources available through the GEF.



c. Results of the third meeting of the BAT/BEP expert group meeting

The secretariat provided an update of the results of the third meeting of the BAT/BEP expert group, indicating that good progress had been made throughout the meeting and in the intersessional period following. She noted that the documents would be made available for public comment in mid-June 2015, with the comment period closing at the beginning of August 2015. The fourth meeting of the expert group would be held in early September 2015, and it was intended to finalize the documents and make them available in the UN languages for INC7. One issue which had been raised during the discussions of the third meeting was a question relating to the guidance required in paragraph 8b of Article 8 of the Convention, as to whether the expert group should prepare the guidance requested, or only consider the technical aspects of the guidance.

The Chair thanked the secretariat for the report, and indicated that issues would be discussed more fully at the face to face Bureau meeting. He called for any comments or questions. Mr. Cissé raised the issue of open burning, which was a key issue for Africa, and indicated that the regional group had requested that this be taken up by the expert group. The Chair took note of this issue, highlighting the previous discussion on the topic, and indicated it could be discussed further at the next Bureau meeting. Ms. Seymour thanked the secretariat for their efforts, and noted the good progress made to date. She questioned whether there had been consistency of experts throughout the process, and, if there had been changes, whether this had affected the work. In response, the secretariat indicated that there had been consistent participation by experts; however a change of membership in the observers had introduced some challenges. The Chair took note of this, and indicated that every effort should be made to have those attending the fourth meeting be the same individuals as those participating at the third meeting. He reiterated the thanks to the secretariat, and welcomed an opportunity for a report on the work of the group at the face to face Bureau meeting.

6) Plans for intersessional work of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Finance

The Chair indicated that Bureau members had identified the countries who would provide experts for the ad hoc Group of Experts on Finance established at INC6, and that a letter calling for comments on the mandate as per request at INC6 would be circulated by the secretariat shortly. The regional meetings had collected comments on the issue, which would be provided to the experts. The meeting is tentatively planned to be held in the last week of October, with a 3 to 3.5 day meeting planned. The venue of the meeting is to be confirmed.

The secretariat indicated that the following countries had been nominated: for Africa – Egypt, Gabon and Nigeria; for Asia Pacific – China, Jordan, India, Iran and Japan; for CEE – Latvia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; for GRULAC – Argentina, Brazil and Cuba; and for WEOG – The European Commission, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, USA. The Chair of the INC and the secretariat of the GEF would attend as observers. Relevant institutions would also be invited to attend as observers. The secretariat would compile information submitted by countries in response to the letter on the mandate, and would also prepare a document outlining options for the hosting institution.



The Chair highlighted the importance of the finance discussions as one of the key pillars of support for the work of the Convention, therefore requiring a very good ad-hoc expert group meeting. He flagged the need for further discussion at the face to face meeting. Mr. Lenev raised an issue with one nominated experts, and indicated there may be a need to put forward an alternate candidate.

7) Update on preparations for INC7

The Chair indicated that there had been further discussions with Jordan about hosting the meeting based on their offer at INC6. He indicated there was a need for a large number of documents to be prepared for INC7 on issues where progress was to be made for adoption at COP1. He considered that a proposal to postpone INC7 until March 2016 would provide more opportunity to finalize high quality documents, and allow guidance documents to be prepared in languages. To facilitate document preparation, discussion at a face to face Bureau meeting would be key.

The secretariat indicated that they were exploring options to hold INC7 from 7 to 11 March 2016, with regional meetings on Sunday 6 March 2016. Consideration could also be given to hosting a 6-days INC, taking into account the number of issues to be resolved. He noted the offer from Jordan to host the meeting, either in Amman or in the Dead Sea, and indicated that work would continue with Jordan considering the possible options. As usual, back up bookings have also been made in UN facilities in Bangkok and Nairobi for these dates, and a booking is available in Geneva in May (as the CICG is not available in March). Financial support has been sought from governments. Further to INC6, the requests for technical input on identified issues, and for offers to physically host the secretariat have been circulated, however few responses have been received to date. The secretariat invited the Bureau to encourage their regions to provide input, as the information is needed to have high quality documents. It is anticipated there will be around 20 meeting documents for INC7 as well as information documents. There are plans to hold regional preparatory meetings in advance of INC7, subject to available resources. Inputs from discussions at a face to face Bureau meeting will also facilitate document preparation.

The Chair emphasized the importance of submission of information, and that good documents are essential for a successful INC7, leading to well-prepared COP1. He highlighted that INC6 gave clear mandates for the inputs required to INC7. He noted that it was important for all governments to prepare well, and that regional preparatory meetings would assist with this. He indicated his hope that it would be possible to organize the meeting in Jordan, however noted the other available options and asked that the Bureau keeps the issue under review. He then sought input from the Bureau as to the suitability of the proposed dates.

Bureau members agreed to the dates indicated, provided they did not conflict with other meetings such as the open ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives which would be held near the end of February 2016. The Chair therefore requested the secretariat to post information on dates for INC7 on the website.



8) Next Bureau meeting in June / July 2015

The Chair thanked Mr. Lenev for offering to host the meeting in Russia and highlighted the importance of the face to face meeting. Mr. Lenev confirmed that the Government of the Russian Federation was very happy to host the Bureau meeting, and noted the challenges with dates, however would have discussions with his capital to confirm options. The bureau meeting is tentatively scheduled to take place from 1 to 2 July 2015.

9) Any other issues raised by the Bureau

No other issues were raised.